797 telephone, with which they keep in touch with the Presbytery in Darwin, not only were the good fathers there to greet us, but the children of the mission school had also been given a holiday to celebrate the occasion. Small boys and half-grown lads were there in force and soon crowded round the 'plane. The bearded men against the fence kept in the background, while women and girls peered over the stile that leads into the garden. Men and [291] boys wore only the little nags, women and girls a short sarong —and they are all the better for this lack of clothing.

KINDLY and shrewd old Father Gsell, who founded the mission rather more than a quarter of a century ago, has his own ideas with regard to the black man. He does not ruin his health by dressing him (or her) up in mission clothing, and he sees that the blacks who come into the mission do not become mere spongers and hangers-on. When a black asks for flour or anything else that he requires, Father Gsell replies, "What have you to give for it?" He may have a spear, for which the good father has no use, but he will take it, or anything that the black can offer in payment. If the black's reply is "Nothing," Father Gsell will say "Well, you are a big, strong man; you can dig the garden."

It does not matter that the garden has been dug before. The thing is to keep the blacks from becoming cadgers. Treated so, they retain their self-respect and do not degenerate into useless loafers hanging round the mission station, just for what they can get without any effort. The mission fathers, of course, do all they can for the sick and injured—that is an entirely different matter. Every missionary who has been long on any field in North Australia must recognize that it is impossible to do anything with a full-grown black to alter his outlook in any way, and the methods of the Sacred Heart Mission must appeal to all unbigoted members of any church as admirable commonsense.

It is only with the very young that the missionaries can hope for any success in the inculcating of Christian ideals, and it is towards the little boys and girls that the good fathers look for 797 the reward of their self-sacrificing labours. They are able to 562 get them, too, without pandering to the laziness of their parents. 567 The natives, who are always fond of children, are quite willing 439 to have their little boys well fed and well looked after; but, [855] when it comes to the girls, self-interest enters into the question. Little girls can be sold to the Japanese of the pearling fleets, and the Japanese are liberal in the matter of prices.

FATHER Gsell must therefore buy the girls in competition with the Japanese. It has been said that this is countenancing a shameful and revolting slave-trade, and that to buy the girls is definitely wrong in principle. What would the worthy critics do? Are they content to see this dreadful traffic continued, or have they any practical alternative to offer? Father Gsell is trying at least to save as many girls as possible from the horrible fate in store for them. The regular patrol of North Australian waters by the forces of the Government may eventually put an end to the practice, but what of all these little girls in the meantime? As they grow up, the Christian boys and girls marry one another, and, as the Christians have one wife only, they are unwilling to sell or to hire her out to the Japanese. This, like all the dealings of the Sacred Heart Mission with the islanders, is based on practical common sense.

[p. 14(B)]